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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 PRAGUE 000123

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DHS FOR A/S PAUL ROSENZWEIG

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TAGS: [CVIS](#) [CMGT](#) [PREL](#) [CPAS](#) [ASEC](#) [EZ](#)
SUBJECT: DHS A/S PAUL ROSENZWEIG CHAIRS SEVENTH BCWG AND
BRIEFS CZECHS ON VISA WAIVER REFORM

REF: PRAGUE 0073

Classified By: Consul General Stuart Hatcher for reason 1.4 (b,d).

Summary

11. (C) DHS Acting Assistant Secretary for International Affairs Paul Rosenzweig and DHS Office of International Enforcement Director Daniel Sullivan met with Czech Foreign and Interior Ministers on a visit to Prague on January 24 and 125. After addressing a multilateral meeting hosted by the Interior Ministry on the Administration's proposed changes to the Visa Waiver Program (reftel), the delegation made a courtesy call on Interior Minister Ivan Langer, and A/S Rosenzweig then chaired a Bilateral Consular Working Group, held at the Ambassador's residence and co-chaired by Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg. A/S Rosenzweig summarized current U.S. Administration thinking about Visa Waiver reform, expressing the hope that some new countries might participate before the end of this Administration. The Czech Foreign Ministry representatives expressed their political concerns about the potential failure of the initiative, referred to the "Coalition for Visa Equality" as a useful mechanism for addressing the issue, and expressed a desire to develop a work plan that would mesh with U.S. interests. The BCWG was followed by a press conference. Day 2 of the visit was organized by the Interior Ministry and was devoted to border security issues. The DHS delegation toured the State Securities Printer (Statni Tiskarna Cenin) where the new Czech biometric passport is produced. This was followed by a briefing on the security facilities at Ruzyně International Airport, during which Interior Minister Langer personally conducted a 90 minute tour of the airport, also followed by a brief press conference. In the end both A/S Rosenzweig and his Czech interlocutors were satisfied with the visit. The U.S. side was impressed with Czech capabilities as a border security partner, and the Czechs were reassured about the goodwill of the United States in attempting Visa Waiver reform. A window of opportunity for cooperation on border security issues is now wide open, and should remain that way while hope remains for visa waiver reform. End Summary.

INTERIOR MINISTER AS DIPLOMAT

12. (U) DHS Assistant Secretary Paul Rosenzweig visited Prague on January 24 and 25. He was accompanied by DHS Office of International Enforcement Director Daniel Sullivan, DHS EU Attach designate Jacquelyn Bednarz, and Consular Affairs Office of Field Support and Liaison (CA/VO/F) Director John Brennan. Their initial meeting, hosted by the Interior Ministry and introduced by Deputy Interior Minister Zdenek Zajicek, was a briefing of representatives from the 12 other Visa Roadmap countries and is reported on in reftel.

Following the multilateral meeting, the DHS delegation met with Interior Minister Ivan Langer for 30 minutes. Langer thanked A/S Rosenzweig for choosing Prague for the site of the multilateral meeting and stated that entrance into the VWP was a high priority for the Czech Republic.

13. (U) A/S Rosenzweig provided an executive summary of the points he made earlier to all the Roadmap countries: The U.S. Administration realizes VWP as it currently exists is "a bit of a relic" focused on economic migration and preventing illegal overstays. After September 11 the United States realized that the current program overvalued economics and undervalued security, and recognized that reform was needed. The President's statement in Tallinn in November 2006 proposing VWP reform was an important commitment on his part to seek changes that would place more emphasis on security. The main challenge to changing the existing system was the need for Congressional legislation mandating the changes.

14. (U) A/S Rosenzweig outlined four main features that he viewed as likely to be included in the legislation. Quick reporting of both blank and issued lost or stolen passports; better exchange of information on passengers flying to the United States; repatriation of citizens that violate U.S. law by overstaying 90 days; and electronic travel authorization. Other items likely to be discussed on a bilateral basis would be security measures at airports, air marshals on direct flights to the United States, and perhaps some other things such as indicating when a passport holder is a dual national, or holds a passport that is a replacement for a lost or stolen passport.

15. (U) In response to a question from Interior Minister Langer on data privacy, A/S Rosenzweig said that the U.S. was

PRAGUE 00000123 002 OF 004

not a "data privacy no man's land", rather there was a robust privacy system. DHS had both a chief privacy officer and a civil liberties officer, and Rosenzweig viewed his job as convincing the Europeans "different doesn't mean worse." The U.S. was willing to look at ways to satisfy Czech privacy concerns, such as soliciting affirmative consent to share data from travelers, rather than inferring that someone's decision to travel implied a consent to permit sharing of their data.

16. (U) A/S Rosenzweig emphasized that the underlying principles for the U.S. were reciprocity and uniformity. He promised that the United States would not ask the Czechs to do anything the United States would not itself be willing to do. He also stressed that the United States would not develop a two tier VWP system and that the same rules would apply to all participants, new and old. The essence of the DHS proposal was to get authority from Congress to waive the three percent visa refusal rate requirement, in return for enhanced security requirements.

17. (U) Minister Langer thanked A/S Rosenzweig for his explanation of the way forward and stated that the Czechs realize that goodwill is not enough to achieve success. Langer said he looks forward to future cooperation on VWP admittance based on four pillars: security, free travel, privacy and partnership. Langer also thanked Rosenzweig for hosting a Czech technical delegation February 1 and 2. He hoped the U.S. Czech partnership would be fruitful and highlighted his agreement with the need for reciprocity and uniformity.

BCWG: FOREIGN MINISTRY EMPHASIZES POLITICAL IMPORTANCE OF VWP ISSUE

18. (U) Following the meeting with the Interior Minister, the scene shifted to the Ambassador's residence where A/S Rosenzweig convened a Bilateral Consular Working Group. The Czechs were represented by Foreign Minister Schwarzenberg,

Political Director Povejsil, Consular Department Director Novy, several other Foreign Ministry officials, and three representatives from the Interior Ministry, including Asylum and Immigration Department director Tomas Heisman. In addition to the DHS/State delegation, the U.S. was represented by DCM Munter, CG Hatcher, Deputy CG Mesquita, Polcouns Dodman, as well as the Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Citizenship and Immigration Services attaches from Vienna.

¶9. (U) After introductions, DCM Munter invited the Foreign Minister to make a brief statement. The new Foreign Minister thanked the U.S. for its initiative and expressed the hope that the U.S. would work "hand-in-hand" with the seven countries in the "Coalition for Visa Equality" (COVE) on progress toward participation in VWP. His statement was followed by A/S Rosenzweig's summary of U.S. thinking (see paragraphs 3 - 6). He emphasized again the principals of uniformity and reciprocity, and assured the Foreign Minister that the U.S. understood Czech sensitivities about its exclusion from the visa waiver program. He said reform would provide a concrete set of requirements to qualify for VWP.

¶10. (C) Political Director Povejsil noted that concrete requirements might not be enough. He thought political commitments should be real as well. From his perspective, there were two pitfalls. First, legislation must be approved, which everyone recognized was not a certainty. Second, whatever legislation emerged should be such that the Czechs could qualify. Legislation that still put VWP beyond their reach wouldn't do any good. He was working with the seven countries in COVE to develop a work plan that would be compatible with the U.S. program. He was also concerned about fallout within the European Union. The proposed changes would be an "upgrade" for the new EU members, but a "downgrade" for the old members. He thought perhaps the U.S. should address the EU as a whole on this issue. Povejsil also remarked that the visa issue was an "internal political question" for the Czech government and that Foreign Ministers were judged on the progress they made on this issue. A/S Rosenzweig responded that the President's commitment to this issue was a significant fact, and that the Administration intended to work hard to see it through. The Czechs should try to temper expectations and find the right tone of positive intent. The Interior Ministry representatives indicated that security issues would be addressed the next day, when then had an extensive program planned.

PRAGUE 00000123 003 OF 004

THE CZECH REPUBLIC AS STRONG BORDER SECURITY PARTNER

¶11. (U) On January 25 the Interior Ministry arranged two events. First, there was a tour of the State Security Printer, a facility where the Czechs produce their new biometric passport, which they began issuing on September 1, ¶2006. This was followed by a briefing and tour of the international airport. These two events are described below, but in both cases the Czechs demonstrated themselves to be serious border security partners with highly professional operations in both places.

BIOMETRIC PASSPORT PRODUCTION

¶12. (U) Czech passports are produced by the State Security Printer, a quasi private company that is wholly owned by the Ministry of Finance. Technical Director Frantisek Malec provided a briefing and tour of the facility. The Finance Minister appoints its director general and the Deputy Finance Minister is the board chairperson. It was established in 1928 to produce banknotes and other security products, and has been self-financing since the early 1990s. It must bid competitively on government contracts against such competitors as the Canadian Banknote Company. It is

certified to the level of "EU Secret" and so can produce EU visas. It has produced about 100,000 biometric passports since production began in September 2006. Among other features it contains a polycarbonate data page and a textile spine to prevent cracking or disassembly. There is a biometric data chip integrated into the data page. Passport applications are taken at 227 local offices. The civil servant acceptance agent captures the photo and tests it for ICAO biometric face compatibility. The system also generates the application, which the applicant signs on a signature pad. The data is encrypted and sent to a central system. There is centralized production of all full validity passports; emergency passports are only valid for six months.

No passports are produced overseas - only travel letters. Biometric fingerprints will be introduced by May 2008. The production facility is clean and extremely secure. It has no internet connections and all activity is recorded by closed-circuit cameras. The passport fee is 600 Czech crowns (about \$30), whereas they cost about \$70 to produce. Passport holders can check the functioning of the chip using a kiosk at the passport agencies, although it does not show the data, just a red or green light. Malec could not remember any cases of stolen passport blanks.

INTERIOR MINISTER LEADS TOUR OF RUZYNE AIRPORT

¶13. (C) The final stop for the delegation was a 90 minute tour of the security facilities at Ruzyne Airport. After a briefing by airport officials, which included the head of the Foreigner's Police (Urban) and the head of the Foreigner's Police for the Prague region, Col. Milan Kocik, Interior Minister Langer led the delegation on a tour of several screening areas of the airport. These included passport control, passenger security screening (done at the gate), as well as aircraft security. At passport control all names are checked against a database of terrorists, criminals and individuals who have been declared persona non grata. There is 100 percent screening of all outgoing hold baggage except for transit within the EU. Aircraft security at the gate is very tight. Following this visit there was a brief press conference at which A/S Rosenzweig commented on the impressive and professional airport facility and expressed the hope that the two countries could work together toward easier travel to the U.S. When pressed, he said he hoped there would be some new entrants into the program by the end of the current administration.

COMMENT

¶14. (C) During the planning stages of this visit, post was concerned that when it occurred there might not be enough "news" to make it worth the trouble, and that it might also inflate Czech expectations about entry into the visa waiver program. The first worry proved groundless: A/S Rosenzweig provided a detailed picture of Administration thinking on visa waiver reform, which included some areas where work might already begin (such as reporting of lost and stolen passport information). The Czechs were flattered to have their country chosen as the place for him to deliver his

PRAGUE 00000123 004 OF 004

message to the other Roadmap countries. Inevitably, expectations did rise, and many eyes are turned anxiously toward the U.S. Congress. It was interesting to note how the two ministries involved handled this visit. The foreign ministry highlighted for A/S Rosenzweig the domestic political dangers if Visa Waiver reform fails to pass, but recognized that this visit was really the Interior Ministry's show. The Interior Ministry recognized this as an opportunity to demonstrate Czech fitness as a border security partner, and, starting with Langer, made a convincing and forceful case. The outcome for the U.S. is excellent: We have a window of opportunity to press forward with border

security initiatives we care about, such as data sharing, and with an agency (the Ministry of the Interior) that recognizes, at least for the moment, the value of close cooperation. Whether this would survive if visa waiver reform fails is unknown, but for the present we should press ahead.

¶15. (U) A/S Rosenzweig did not have an opportunity to clear this cable before his departure.

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